# Professional Identity Transformation (PIT)

Summary – for discussion at the workshop on 10th April, 2018, Split, Croatia.

Professional identity:

- comprises the *meanings attached to an individual by ourselves and others* and are displayed in attitudes, behaviours and the stories we tell about ourselves to ourselves and to others;

- is based on *social identities*, associated both with the profession and personal identities (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). See Figure 1, below.
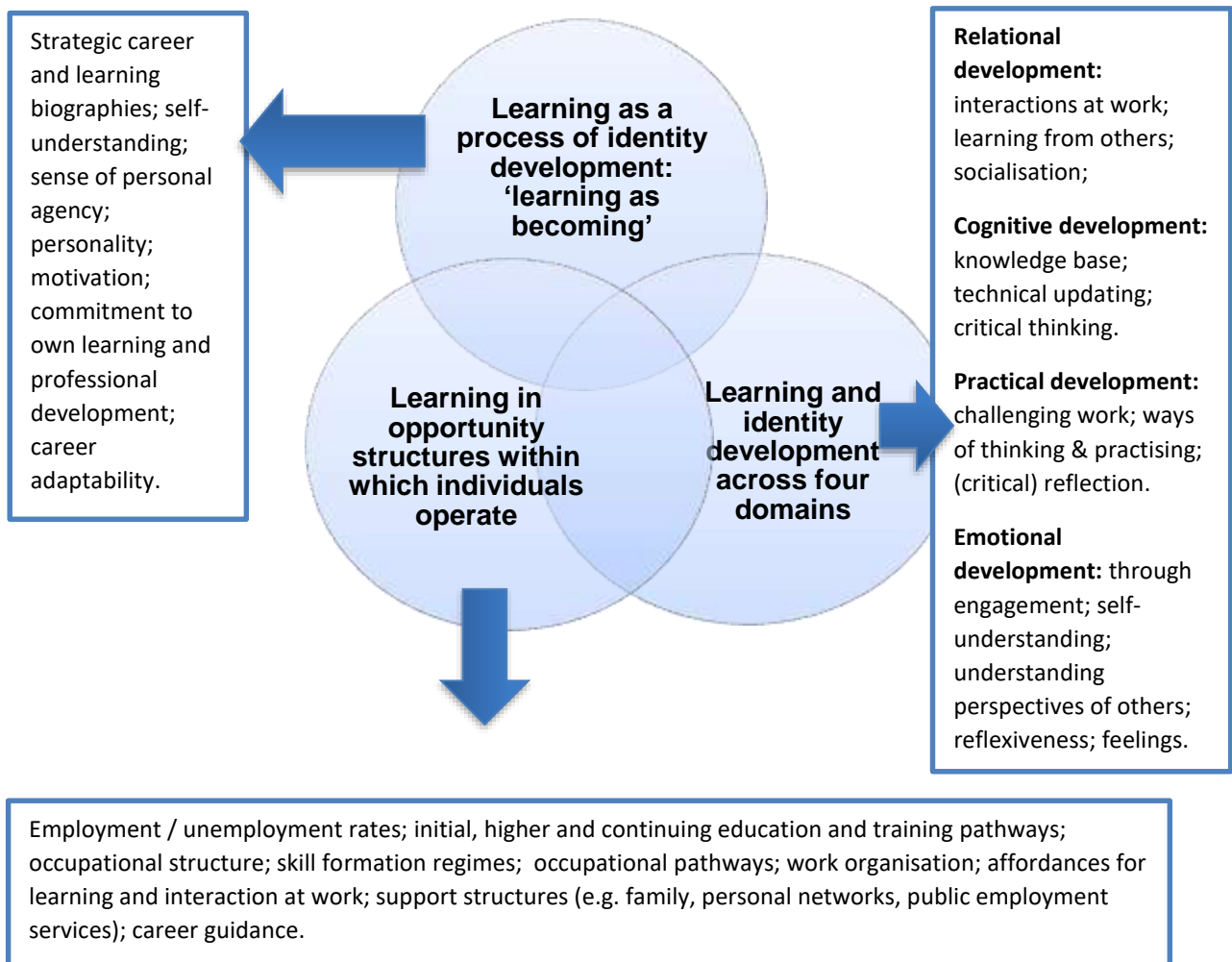
Figure 1: Dynamic model of occupational identity formation (Brown, 1997)
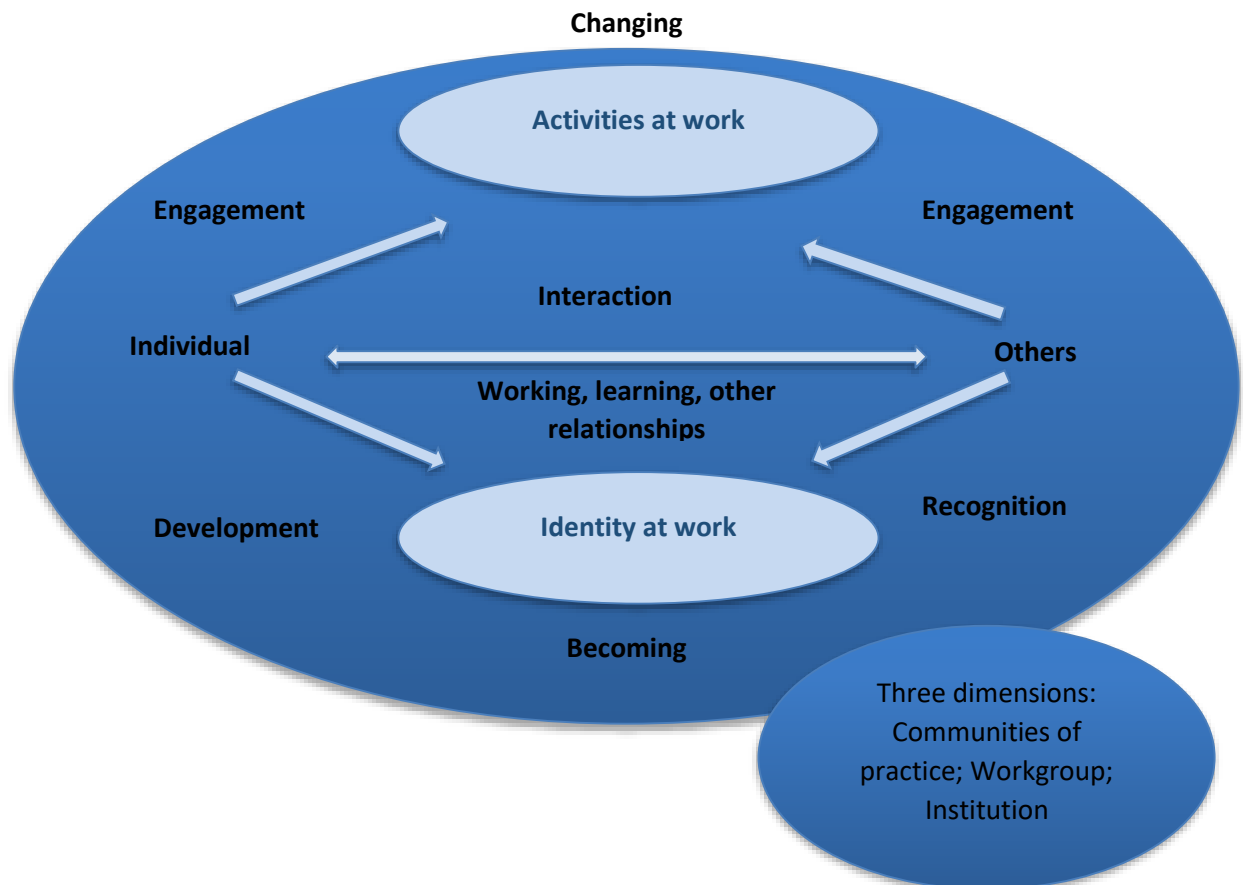
Further developments in thinking about identity development at work (Brown, & Bimrose, 2014; 2018) led to the idea that learning at work can be effectively supported if it is understood that such learning can be represented as:

- *a process of identity development*;
- in *four inter-related domains*; and
- taking place in the *context of particular opportunity structures* (see below, Figure 2).

Figure 2: Key factors influencing learning and identity development at work

Strategic career and learning biographies; self-understanding; sense of personal agency; personality; motivation; commitment to own learning and professional development; career adaptability.

Learning as a process of identity development: 'learning as becoming'

Learning in opportunity structures within which individuals operate

Learning and identity development across four domains

Relational development: interactions at work; learning from others; socialisation;

Cognitive development: knowledge base; technical updating; critical thinking.

Practical development: challenging work; ways of thinking & practising; (critical) reflection.

Emotional development: through engagement; self-understanding; understanding perspectives of others; reflexiveness; feelings.

Employment / unemployment rates; initial, higher and continuing education and training pathways; occupational structure; skill formation regimes; occupational pathways; work organisation; affordances for learning and interaction at work; support structures (e.g. family, personal networks, public employment services); career guidance.

Triggers for Professional Identity Transformation (for discussion)

Examples of (anonymised) online dialogue between PES practitioners in 2017 highlighting current changes and their impact on practice follow. They represent reflections on the changes to which PES practitioners are responding:

1. *Hi, I am work in the Public Employment Service. In my opinion PES must become more flexible, open and market-oriented. That requires a mental shift equally among PES managers and workers. Some changes have begun with establishing a department for employers, so we can focus more on employers' needs. But changes are very slow and we need more education for people in the field working with employers. Moreover, we don't have a consensus on a national level about education system, labour market, demography, quotas for imports manpower, etc., so the changes govern us instead of the other way around.*

2. *Hello from [country]! I am thinking about is how fast can we respond to the changes occurring in our labour market. I just realised that we are at the point where we have to react and anticipate (to be both reactive and proactive) at the same time in order to solve current problems and prevent possible future ones. And what I am happy and enthusiastic about is that we are doing so right now and I am a part of that! What I*

am facing in my everyday work are people (unemployed, employed, employers, colleagues....) not willing to take responsibility for themselves, but shifting it to others. This is problem I am focused on when interacting, trying to give some ideas for a crucial mind-set change in a way what can you do about it instead of what should be done by others.

3. *Hello, greetings from [country.] I work for our PES and I am responsible for guidance and counselling services. In [name of country] we are facing a paradox: a high rate of long term unemployment and a severe lack of workforce. Our most difficult target group - long term unemployed, often from marginalized rural areas - often have a very low level of basic skills and can be confronted with difficult economic and social situations. In fact, in many cases finding a job is their smallest problem. In these cases the pathway towards and employment is very long. We developed an experimental "employability factors" framework, that covers identity, motivations, self-knowledge, social and networking skills etc. We try to use this framework to help these people develop skills, attitudes and behaviours that can help them move on their path towards employment, but also in their life. Tough job! But the focus with this target group should be on long-term investment in improving their human capital, because they are so far from the labour market...*

Professional Identity Transformation for practitioners & their clients

The processes of professional identity development for PES practitioners align with how those practitioners support the career and identity development of their clients.

Practitioners within organisations shape their careers and career stories, but they do so within a context where their roles, views of others and the management of change within organisations also come into play.

The ways that PES professionals support their clients' career conversations about their own careers and identities could be driven by similar processes, which are facilitated in different ways.

Overall

From the research undertaken as part of the EmployID project, it could be that high levels of facilitation could support a process of development in the four inter-related domains (relational development; cognitive development; practical development; and emotional development). That is, methods like an online blended learning programme and the peer coaching workshops, were not just promoting skill development in these four domains, they were actively modelling how to offer support in these areas.

- What methods could you use to support your own PIT, referring to the 4 domains?
- What methods could you use to support the PIT of your clients?

References

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